

MGF 003-81

8 February 1981

Memorandum for : Director, FBIS
Through : Chief, Operations Group
Subject : Monthly Report-Gulf Bureau-January 1981

I. GENERAL

In view of poor reception conditions in the UK, the bureau was able to assist the BBC in covering Tehran media in connection with the release of the hostages. For the 3 days immediately preceeding the release the bureau remained opened on a virtually 24-hour basis, covering early morning and late evening Tehran programming inaudible in the UK. On top of the excitement of covering tehran, we experienced a partial communications outage on 19-20 January which affected our incoming circuit. However, we were able to receive urgent coordination traffic via the U.S. Navy Support Unit here, which enabled us to keep on top of developments leading up to release of the hostages.

New bureau Azeri Monitor [redacted] arrived early in the month and almost immediately started processing material from Azeri and Uzbek programming. [redacted] is optimistic that with time and study he will also be able to master Turkmen, Uighur and Kazahk. [redacted] was a Turkish Monitor at the old Mediterranean bureau. STAT

We have run another newspaper ad campaign for various languages. The response has been very good and this time we have also received applications from Russian speakers. We are hopeful we will be able to fill several vacancies from among this batch of prospects.

II. OPERATIONS

Editorial/Monitorial

1. The BBC, continuing to experience reception problems with Tehran radio, for the first time requested that Gulf

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cover the Domestic Service for extended periods rather than phonepatch or provide fills for items poorly heard in Caversham. At the BBC's request the bureau has assumed coverage of Tehran Domestic Service Persian 1730-2030 GMT daily. The bureau also remained open three nights at the climax of the hostage crisis to cover Tehran, particularly the 0330 GMT newscast. It was the 2030 GMT newscast that finally released the news of the impending hostage release.

2. A shift of all Tehran Arabic coverage to Gulf from Jordan took place on 31 January. The rearrangement frees Amman's monitors to resume coverage of clandestine Voice of Palestine material that had been monitored in Nicosia. Besides the obvious advantage of eliminating voluminous coordination messages, the Arabic programs nicely complement Gulf's original commitment on Iranian regional transmitters. Coverage of the Arabic service currently runs 0400-2030 GMT daily.

3. In response to a Wire Service request an unattributed commentary carried by Moscow's Persian-language service which warned that the United States was planning to launch a military attack against Iran was processed and filed on a crash basis. The commentary, apparently a summary of an item in PRAVDA, contended that the aim behind the operation was to free the hostages or at least force the Iranian Government into unconditionally accepting U.S. terms. According to Western news agencies, this line of Moscow propaganda prompted an official U.S. protest.

4. Broadcasts of the clandestine National Voice of Iran transmitter in Azeri were assumed from Tel Aviv Bureau upon the resignation of the Azeri monitor there. The twice daily programs are covered live Saturday through Wednesday with the Thursday and Friday programs processed on a delayed basis. Our Azeri monitor who was formerly a Turkish monitor at the old Mediterranean bureau is also covering Bakü Azeri, Tashkent Uzbek, Tabriz Azeri, Baghdad Azeri and Tehran Turkish programs.

5. The Islamic Summit Conference held in At-Ta'if, Saudi Arabia, 25-27 January provided our Arabic team with its first taste of extended television monitoring. Video selection lists on the conference proceedings were filed.

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We also covered Riyadh radio news summaries not covered by the BBC and backstopped the radio at times when BBC had primary coverage. The latter exercise proved worthwhile when the bureau was able to text Pakistani president Ziaul Haq's conference speech after the BBC encountered reception problems.

6. Proceedings of the Armenian, Georgian and Azerbaydzhani regional communist party congresses were covered in conjunction with the BBC. The bureau engineer recorded the three radios during the duration of the broadcast day on slow-speed tape recorders. The tape reels were then forwarded daily by air to the BBC for rapid processing. Because of highly variable reception the engineer was compelled to mount virtually an open-speaker watch on the radios in order to switch frequencies as reception varied. This resulted in his registering some 70 hours of overtime in covering Yerevan and Tbilisi radios 22-25 January and Baku 28-30 January. We are awaiting the results of the experiment from the BBC.

7. In response to a BBC request for expanded coverage of Kabul during a British Labour MP delegation's visit to Afghanistan, the bureau added Kabul English to South Asia and attempted to cover Kabul English to Europe. Although reception of the latter remains nil, a few reports were gleaned from the former and also from the regularly covered Kabul Urdu 1330 GMT cast.

8. The new Persian coverage arrangement coordinated among Gulf, Nicosia and Tel Aviv bureaus was implemented on 3 January. In addition to continued coverage of Abadan and Tehran television and regional radios, Gulf began handling the clandestine Free Voice of Iran and Radio Iran transmitters on Sunday and Monday as well as Moscow Persian Sunday through Saturday and Moscow Dari Friday and Saturday. Tabriz radio, which was unheard throughout January, has since been heard occasionally.



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Chief, Gulf Bureau

Attachments:

production report for January 1981
engineering attachment